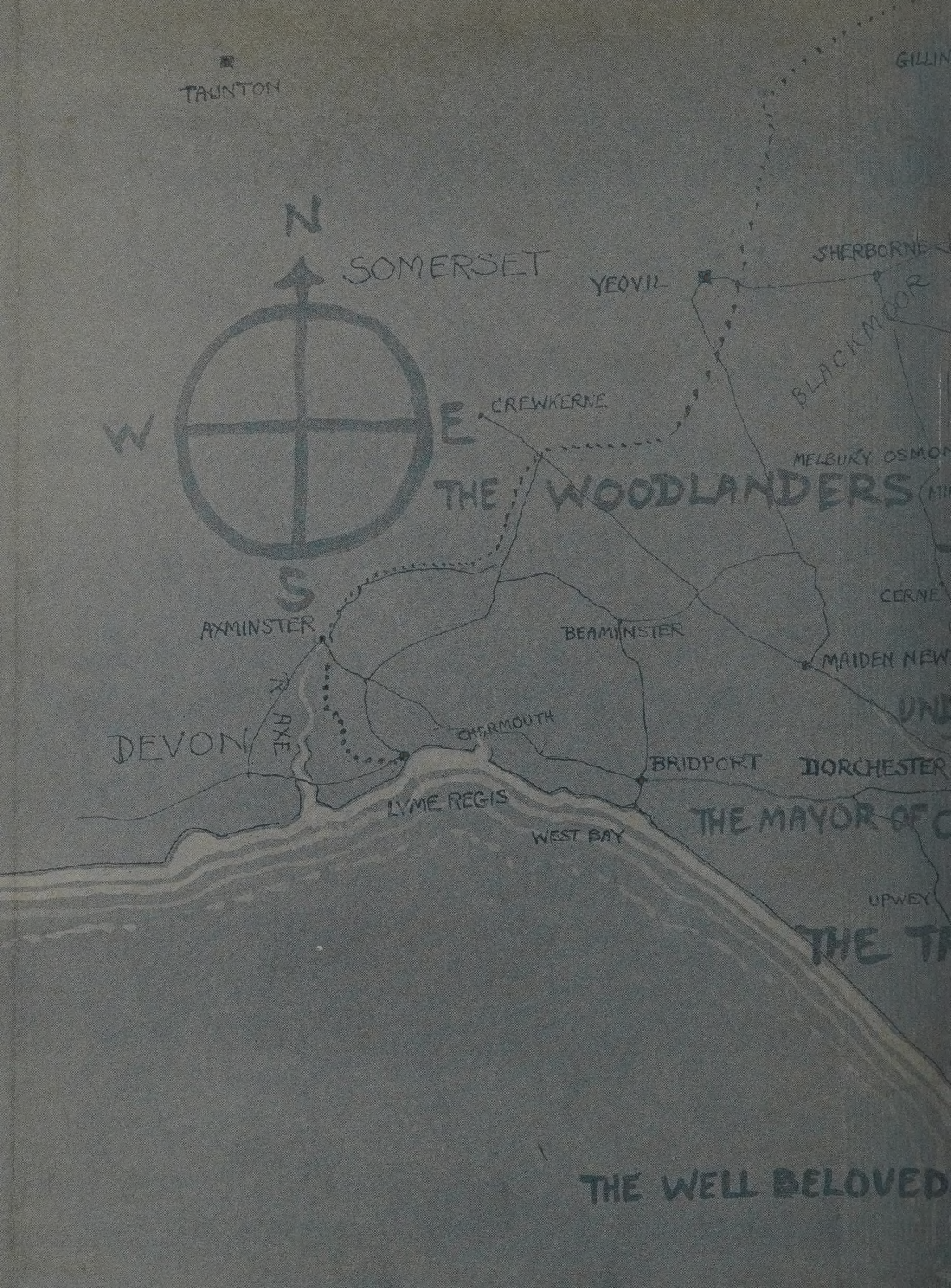
# The Landscape of Thomas Hardy

Donald Maxwell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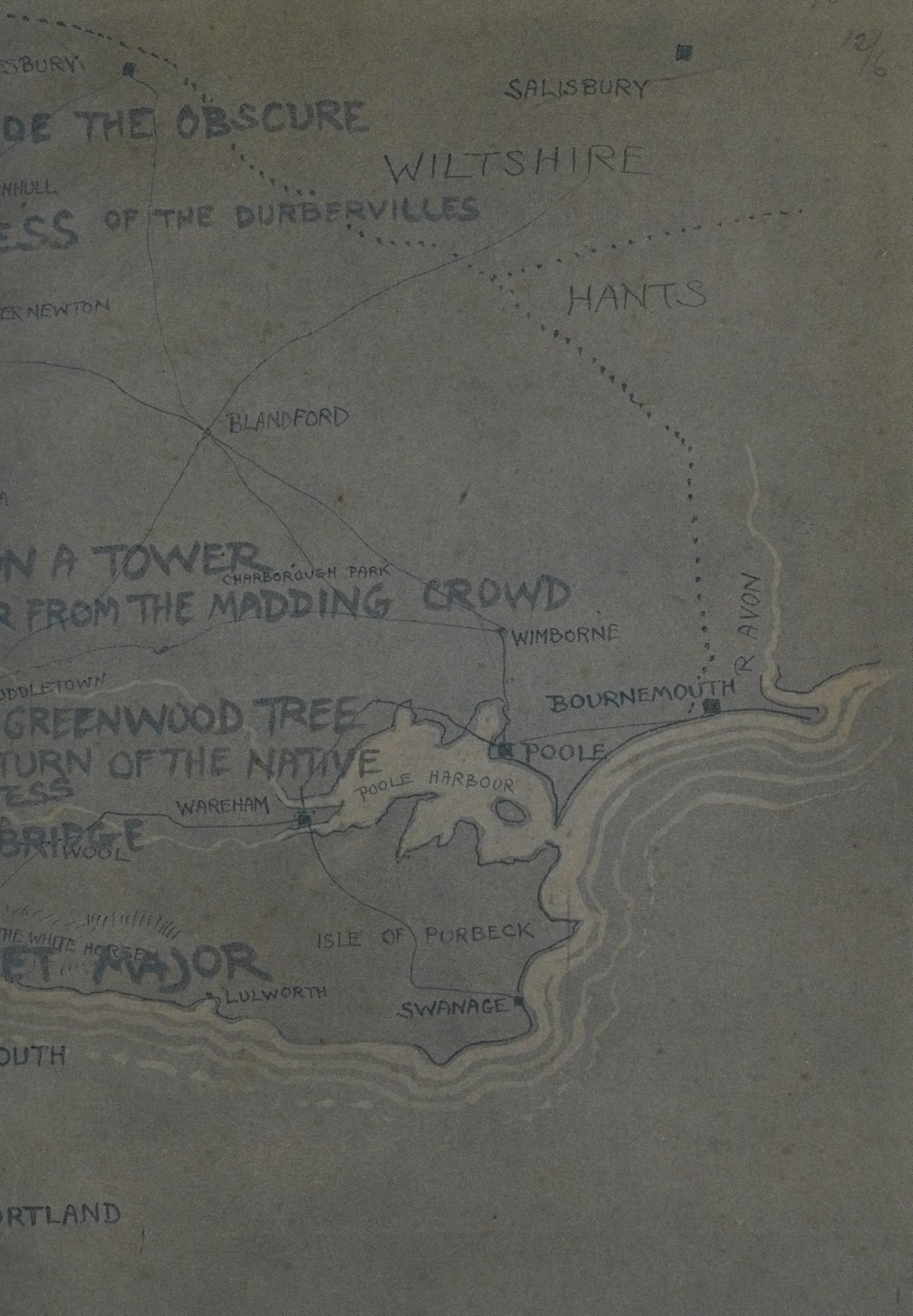
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ISLE OF PURBECK
LULWORTH
SWANAGE
THE WHITE HORSE
ET MAJOR
OUTH
ORTLAND
DE THE OBSCURE
OF THE DURBERVILLES
N A TOWER
R FROM THE MADDING CROWD
GREENWOOD TREE
TURN OF THE NATIVE
BRIDGE

To Alison Joan Elliott Nugent

from

P. M.

Christmas 29.

# THE LANDSCAPE OF THOMAS HARDY

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# THE LANDSCAPE OF THOMAS HARDY

BY

DONALD MAXWELL

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# APOLOGIA PICTORIS

I HAD begun this artist's anthology of the landscape of the Wessex novels and was making progress when I had the good fortune to talk over the matter with Mr. Thomas Hardy himself at Max Gate. The advice that he gave me I took to heart, and the result was that I concentrated my studies of the novels on the ten that are presented here. For various reasons Mr. Hardy thought that *Desperate Remedies* and certain other of his works were written for periodical publication, and in such a way that he did not have much chance of getting a complete atmosphere for each. At the time, I did not see the full force of his preference, but as I followed up the landscape "clues" of the books I soon saw what he meant.

Each of these ten books has a complete and different atmosphere. The landscape setting is essentially different, the two nearest in character being *Under the Greenwood Tree* and *The Woodlanders*. There is a subtle difference, however, between these and the scenes of the two do not overlap.

It would not be enough for an artist merely to be a topographical guide, to take the reader to the places mentioned and described in the Wessex novels, and to leave him with a photographic imprint of them complete in every detail. A photographer would do this better than I so far as the descriptive side is concerned, and Mr. Herman Lea has done so well from his literary topographical point of view that I would be ill advised, as well as discourteous, to attempt to go over the same ground in anything like the same way.

My endeavour is to show not only the scenes and backgrounds of these stories, but to show each, where possible, in the light and "mood" in which it occurs in the narrative. For instance, in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* I have painted the old house at Wool on the sunny afternoon in winter when Angel Clare and Tess arrive there after their wedding, and I have drawn Stonehenge, the last scene of Tess's tragic flight, not to enumerate the Druid stones in all their archæological wonder, but under the grim, cold light of hopeless dawn, relentless, and with no appeal from the doom the fates are weaving.

DONALD MAXWELL

*Borstal*
*Rochester*
*June* 21, 1928

# I

# "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"

(*Marnhull*) MARLOTT

# "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"

OF all Thomas Hardy's works the one best known to the masses is Tess. There are people, or, I should say, there were before the great novelist's death, who associated Hardy and Tess, even if a little vague as to whether they were talking of a film or a play, when they could associate his name with nothing else. I have met people who have read *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and none other of the Wessex novels.

For this reason I will begin my studies in literary landscape with the landscape scenes of this great novel. The fact that my first colour subject (facing page 6) is easy to find will be encouraging to the beginner, for it can be seen literally from the train just outside Wool Station on the north side of the line.

This is the place, more or less, exactly described where Angel Clare and Tess took up their residence after their wedding. I have drawn it as it appears in the book on a golden, sunny afternoon in winter. The ancestral home of the d'Urbervilles by the ancient bridge still stands before us as in the pages of the story.

It is across this bridge that the ghostly coach of the d'Urbervilles passes on Christmas Eve to stop before the entrance of the old house. Clare says something to Tess concerning this legend, but decides not to tell it in full lest she should be made morbid by it. The coach can be heard only by certain people and its passing foretells some dire calamity. The old mural paintings can still be seen, although they are partly defaced, and it is easy to imagine that Tess would be somewhat depressed by their sinister aspect.

## THE LANDSCAPE OF "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"

TO trace the various scenes of the novel, however, it is necessary to begin a long way from Wool. The village of Marnhull must be found, which is evidently the model for Marlott, where the story begins. I have sketched one aspect of this place and incidentally shown a signboard and an inn on the right of the drawing which is the *Crown*, and which we may assume is the original of the *Pure Drop*, where the father of Tess often indulged. In fact, Tess's tragic history might be said to have begun here, for old Durbeyville evidently thought that to be " drunk as a lord " was almost obligatory when he discovered that he is of ancient lineage and that his name Durbeyville is a corrupt following of d'Urberville, a piece of news which had been imparted to him by the vicar.

Marnhull is a Dorset village in the Blackmoor Vale, and it lies on the Stour, here quite a small stream, and is about six miles south-west of Shaftesbury. It is here at Marnhull—*Marlott* in the story—that Angel Clare first meets Tess. It occurs to old Durbeyville that a Mrs. d'Urberville who lived near Cranborne Chase would do something for Tess as a kinswoman, and so Tess is taken into her employment to look after the chickens. Here she falls a victim to the admiration of Alec d'Urberville, who might be described as the villain of the story.

The scene soon goes back to Marlott (Marnhull), where Tess's baby is born and dies. Then she goes as a dairymaid to *Talbothays*, which is a place drawn from various models, but which is certainly set in the valley of the Froom, and is evidently more or less in the neighbourhood of Stinsford. The novelist calls it "The Vale of Great Dairies." I have made a sketch at the end of this chapter which endeavours to show the sort of rich pasture landscape which Tess saw as she looked down upon it for the first time (in Chapter XVI).

## "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"

### CHAPTER XXXIV

"THEY drove by the level road along the valley to a distance of a few miles, and, reaching Wellbridge, turned away from the village to the left, and over the great Elizabethan bridge which gives the place half its name. Immediately behind it stood the house wherein they had engaged lodgings, whose exterior features are so well known to all travellers through the Froom Valley; once portion of a fine manorial residence, and the property and seat of a d'Urberville, but since its partial demolition a farmhouse.

"'Welcome to one of your ancestral mansions!' said Clare as he handed her down. But he regretted the pleasantry; it was too near a satire.

"On entering they found that, though they had only engaged a couple of rooms, the farmer had taken advantage of their proposed presence during the coming days to pay a New Year's visit to some friends, leaving a woman from a neighbouring cottage to minister to their few wants. The absoluteness of possession pleased them, and they realized it as the first moment of their experience under their own exclusive roof-tree."

The Manor House of the D'Urbervilles and the Old Bridge at Wool

## THE VALE OF GREAT DAIRIES

THE Vale of Great Dairies; the valley of the Froom is thus described in Chapter XVI.

"It was intrinsically different from the Vale of Little Dairies, Blackmoor Vale, which, save during her disastrous sojourn at Trantridge, she had exclusively known till now. The world was drawn to a larger pattern here. The enclosures numbered fifty acres instead of ten, the farmsteads were more extended, the groups of cattle formed tribes hereabout; there only families. These myriads of cows stretching under her eyes from the far east to the far west outnumbered any she had ever seen at one glance before. The green lea was speckled as thickly with them as a canvas by Van Alsloot or Sallaert with burghers. The ripe hue of the red and dun kine absorbed the evening sunlight, which the white-coated animals returned to the eye in rays almost dazzling, even at the distant elevation on which she stood.

"The bird's-eye perspective before her was not so luxuriantly beautiful, perhaps, as that other one which she knew so well; yet it was more cheering. It lacked the intensely blue atmosphere of the rival vale, and its heavy soils and scents; the new air was clear, bracing, ethereal. The river itself, which nourished the grass and cows of these renowned dairies, flowed not like the streams in Blackmoor. Those were slow, silent, often turbid; flowing over beds of mud into which the incautious wader might sink and vanish unawares. The Froom waters were clear as the pure River of Life shown to the Evangelist, rapid as the shadow of a cloud, with pebbly shallows that prattled to the sky all day long. There the water-flower was the lily; the crowfoot here."

## "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"

### CHAPTER LVIII

"IN the far north-east sky he could see between the pillars a level streak of light. The uniform concavity of black cloud was lifting bodily like the lid of a pot, letting in at the earth's edge the coming day, against which the towering monoliths and trilithons began to be blackly defined.

"'Did they sacrifice to God here?' asked she.

"'No,' said he.

"'Who to?'

"'I believe to the sun. That lofty stone set away by itself is in the direction of the sun, which will presently rise behind it.'"

* * * *

"The band of silver paleness along the east horizon made even the distant parts of the Great Plain appear dark and near; and the whole enormous landscape bore that impress of reserve, taciturnity, and hesitation which is usual just before day. The eastward pillars and their architraves stood up blackly against the light, and the great flame-shaped Sun-stone beyond them; and the Stone of Sacrifice midway. Presently the night wind died out, and the quivering little pools in the cup-like hollows of the stones lay still."

Stonehenge

# THE LAST CHAPTERS OF "TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES"

IT would be idle to join in the various controversies and discussions as to the exact identity of *Talbothays*. Thomas Hardy's father owned a farm which bore this name, but at the time Tess was written there were no buildings there that could possibly answer to the description of the dairy in the story. That the imaginary or composite *Talbothays* was near Stinsford (the *Mellstock* of Hardy's novels) is evidently intended, for it is on the way to church at Mellstock that Angel Clare carried the dairymaids over the stream.

We have seen *Wellbridge House*, where Clare and Tess were to have spent their honeymoon, and whence Clare, in a kind of trance, carries Tess to lay her in the empty stone " coffin " at " the ruined choir of the Abbey Church," in which picture we recognize Bindon Abbey.

After Clare has parted from Tess, a further consequence of his wife's confession of her past, we find Tess near Bridport (*Port Bredy*) at a dairy-farm. After this, on account of scarcity of work, she goes to *Flintcomb Ash*, somewhere upon the bleak upland known as Barcombe Down. Here she works with Marian, who describes the estate as a " starve-acre " place.

The landscape of this part of the story is hard and desperate, and fully in keeping with the tragic situation in which Tess finds herself.

Then the scene of the story moves on and via Bere Regis, with Alec d'Urberville in the picture again, to Bournemouth

(*Sandbourne*), where Clare traces her. In a frenzy at d'Urberville's baseness she kills him and follows Clare, who has left the house.

Together they flee to the New Forest and spend a strange honeymoon in an empty house near Ringwood. Then they take to the road again, fearing discovery, and the last tragic scene before Tess is taken is laid at Stonehenge, into which they have come in the darkness, not knowing where they are.

It is a fitting scene for this last act, and Tess sleeps upon the stone of sacrifice as the grey dawn breaks and the uncouth shapes of the heathen worship loom out against the angry sky.

THE VALE OF GREAT DAIRIES

# II

# "UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE"

(*Mellstock*) CHURCH AND VICARAGE, STINSFORD

# "UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE"

OF all the novels of Thomas Hardy, there is none that surpasses for sheer naturalistic "drawing" the early story entitled *Under the Greenwood Tree*. It is great because it is so simple. Others of his stories are more dazzling, more tragic, more filled with that sombre majesty that we feel when some great painter dips his brush in earthquake or eclipse; but here is a work like Hobbema's "Avenue" or Turner's "Crossing the Brook," a presentation of scenes loved so well that the beholder must love them too.

He never forgot Stinsford, the place of his boyhood. He brings it in again and again, and *Mellstock* is none other than Stinsford. His memories of Stinsford are ever pleasant. When he builds a house (Max Gate), it is within easy stroll of Stinsford, and at Stinsford, of all places, he wished to be laid to rest when his work was done.

"Yes, regard me as a parishioner, certainly," he writes to Mr. Cowley, the vicar of Stinsford. "I hope to be still more one when I am in a supine position some day."

In his modesty, he never thought of Westminster Abbey; but to-day, although his ashes rest in London, his heart is lying within sound of the crystal streams and murmuring trees of his beloved village.

And what sort of place is Stinsford, the Mellstock of his literary dream? I now will tell you, as best I can, first with a drawing that shows the little church among the trees, and then by means of such description as I can summon in words to give some faint picture of so lovely a corner of old England, as I saw it upon the Sunday morning after the great novelist's death.

Imagine a wooded ridge as a background, and a slope of grassland well planted with goodly trees. In the midst of this, set like a casket in a curtained recess, gleams Stinsford Church. Below this sunlit ridge extends a green expanse of water meadows, intersected with glittering streams. So wonderful is it, in all its winter sunshine, that the scene appears to be some vision of a more perfect world than the one we know.

I have never seen water so clear. The dappled depths of its pools could be there, but only sunlit air. I saw the chancel window mirrored upon the stream, fathomed by the eye as if no water were there, and could not but think of the river, pure as crystal, that proceeded out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

*Under the Greenwood Tree* is a story of a village choir and of changes in long-accustomed uses. When a new vicar decided to install an organ, to be played by the village schoolmistress, in place of the string and wind instruments, it seemed to many that all was over with religion and with the Church of England. In some cases the barrel-organ had superseded the instruments, and

(*Mellstock*)

STINSFORD

then the harmonium ousted the barrel-organ. Thomas Hardy's uncle "played" the barrel-organ at Stinsford Church for the space of forty years.

Apparently, there was considerable chance of mistakes, even in playing a barrel-organ, because the rolls had to be changed and some skill and judgment were necessary. "Uncle Hardy" was an adept. He managed the old instrument with good taste and pride. He played it, literally, as long as he lived, for he died suddenly in church while presiding at the "organ." Thus the great novelist took as his theme the ups and downs and hopes and fears of a village choir and their friends, and of this life "Under the Greenwood Tree" he had first-hand knowledge.

Many critics of Thomas Hardy's work have seen in his fearless painting of dark days, of tragic mistakes and human weakness, a deliberate pessimism, and, still more curiously, an antagonism to the Church. It is true that the atmosphere of churchmanship in which Hardy was reared was not an exhilarating one. To a sensitive mind, it must have tended towards melancholy. However, there was no antagonism from Hardy the man, even if there seemed to some to be indifference to religious forms in Hardy the writer. He often attended Stinsford Church. He helped the vicar in various ways, especially with his advice on architectural and musical matters. Eleven years ago he wrote: "As we have often said, we all feel ourselves your parishioners still—I suppose from our family's one hundred years' association with the parish and church music."

The study in the vicarage at Stinsford is the room described in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, when the aggrieved but respectful choir assembled to remonstrate with the vicar about the new organ. Not long ago, Hardy was sitting in a corner of this very study, talking to the present vicar, when he alluded to his

introduction of this room into the story. "In this very corner, too," he said smilingly, "I used to sit at my Confirmation classes."

That the "tyranny of the choir" is no new thing is apparent in the account of a morning service in Mellstock, when some schoolgirls dared to join in the singing as to make it almost congregational.

"When the singing was in progress there was suddenly discovered to be a strong and shrill reinforcement from some point, ultimately found to be the schoolgirls' aisle. At every attempt it grew bolder and more distinct. At the third time of singing these intrusive feminine voices were as mighty as those of the regular singers; in fact, the flood of sound from this quarter assumed such an individuality that it had a time, a key, almost a tune of its own, surging upwards when the gallery plunged downwards, and the reverse.

"Now this had never happened before within the memory of man. The girls, like the rest of the congregation, had always been humble and respectful followers of the gallery; singing at sixes and sevens if without gallery leaders; never interfering with the ordinances of these practised artists—having no will, union, power, or proclivity, except it was given them from the established choir enthroned above them.

"A good deal of desperation became noticeable in the gallery throats and strings, which continued throughout the musical portion of the service. Directly the fiddles were laid down, Mr. Penny's spectacles put in the sheath, and the text had been given out, an indignant whispering began.

"'Did ye hear that, souls?' Mr. Penny said, in a groaning breath.

"'Brazen-faced hussies!' said Bowman.

"'Trew; why, they were every note as loud as we, fiddles and all, if not louder.'

"'Fiddles and all,' echoed Bowman bitterly.

"'Shall anything bolder be found than united women?' Mr. Spinks murmured.

"'What I want to know is,' said the tranter (as if he knew already, but that civilization required this form of words), 'what business people have to tell maidens to sing like that when they don't sit in a gallery, and never have entered one in their lives? That's the question, my sonnies.'

"''Tis the gallery have got to sing, all the world knows,' said Mr. Penny. 'Why, souls, what's the use o' the ancients spending scores of pounds to build galleries if people down in the lowest depths of the church sing like that at a moment's notice?'"

The musicians' gallery in Stinsford Church long ago disappeared, and no one seems to know when it was removed and where it went. A plan of the old arrangement hangs in the vicarage—a plan that was drawn by Thomas Hardy, showing an architect's knowledge of the old construction.

"The gallery of Mellstock Church had a status and sentiment of its own. A stranger there was regarded with a feeling altogether differing from that of the congregation below towards him. Banished from the nave as an intruder whom no originality could make interesting, he was received above as a curiosity that no unfitness could render dull. The gallery, too, looked down upon and knew the habits of the nave to its remotest peculiarity, and had an extensive stock of exclusive information about it; whilst the nave knew nothing of the gallery people, as gallery people, beyond their loud-sounding minims and chest notes.

". . . Old William sat in the centre of the front row, his violoncello between his knees and two singers on each hand. Behind

him, on the left, came the treble singers and Dick; and, on the right, the tranter and the tenors. Farther back was old Mail with the altos and supernumeraries."

The geography of *Under the Greenwood Tree* is very simple. The compass of the whole tale is within easy distance of Mellstock (which we have seen is Stinsford) except for one journey to Weymouth. Yalbury Great Wood, in which Geoffrey Day was keeper, is, of course, Yellowham Wood, between Dorchester and Puddletown.

If Thomas Hardy had written nothing else, we should remember him with gratitude for this vivid picture of Mellstock and its singers "Under the Greenwood Tree."

In Yellowham Wood

# III

# "THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE"

THE EASTERN ENTRANCE TO DORCHESTER

# "THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE"

*THE Mayor of Casterbridge* is generally known as the novel of Dorchester. Casterbridge is almost exactly Dorchester as it was when Thomas Hardy knew it. He describes its general appearance in Chapter IV.

"It was on a Friday evening, near the middle of September, and just before dusk, that they reached the summit of a hill within a mile of the place they sought. There were high-banked hedges to the coach-road here, and they mounted upon the green turf within, and sat down. The spot commanded a full view of the town and its environs.

"'What an old-fashioned place it seems to be!' said Elizabeth-Jane, while her silent mother mused on other things than topography. 'It is huddled all together; and it is shut in by a square wall of trees, like a plot of garden ground by a box-edging.'

" Its squareness was, indeed, the characteristic which most struck the eye in this antiquated borough, the borough of Casterbridge—at that time, recent as it was, untouched by the faintest sprinkle of modernism. It was compact as a box of dominoes. It had no suburbs—in the ordinary sense. Country and town met at a mathematical line.

" To birds of the more soaring kind Casterbridge must have appeared on this fine evening as a mosaic-work of subdued reds, browns, greys, and crystals, held together by a rectangular frame of deep green. To the level eye of humanity it stood as an indistinct mass behind a dense stockade of limes and chestnuts, set in the midst of miles of rotund down and concave field. The mass became gradually dissected by the vision into towers, gables, chimneys, and casements, the highest glazings shining bleared and bloodshot with the coppery fire they caught from the belt of sunlit cloud in the west.

" From the centre of each side of this tree-bound square ran avenues east, west, and south into the wide expanse of corn-land and combe to the distance of a mile or so."

Since this description was written time and " progress " have done their worst with Dorchester. In vain have I looked for a view of the town that is anything like this picture. There are so many new and mean buildings beyond this " hedge " on all sides that the square shape is not recognizable. The railway has spared the actual site of the Amphitheatre, but this unique feature of Roman England is spoilt by its unromantic environment.

The stately avenues of trees that mark out the ancient boundaries of the town are still preserved, but many of the old-world buildings of young Hardy's day have been swept away and many shop fronts have tried to attract customers by being very commonplace and having nothing distinctive of Dorchester about them.

So general is the belief that Casterbridge is none other than Dorchester as it is to-day that readers have written to Mr. Thomas Hardy pointing out "mistakes" in his book. Mr. Hardy often replied to his correspondents in good humour thanking them for throwing light on the life and times of old Dorchester.

The author had it from Mr. Hardy himself that on one occasion he mildly rebuked a would-be critic of his to the effect that excellent and accurate as was his correspondent's knowledge of certain customs in Dorchester he [Mr. Hardy] was in this case writing about another place called Casterbridge. No doubt Dorchester and Casterbridge had much in common, but they were not the same.

The sketch I have made at the head of this chapter shows Dorchester at sunset from the bridge at the eastern entrance to the town. Whatever changes have come over Dorchester, one clear indication of her ancient lineage remains—the straight road driven through from east to west, the one clear and surviving mark of Imperial Rome.

## "THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE"

### CHAPTER XLI

"HENCHARD, however, leaving the town by the east road, proceeded to the second, or stone, bridge and thence struck into this path of solitude, following its course beside the stream till the dark shapes of the Ten Hatches cut the sheen thrown upon the river by the weak lustre that still lingered in the west. In a second or two he stood beside the weir-hole where the water was at its deepest. He looked backwards and forwards, and no creature appeared in view. He then took off his coat and hat, and stood on the brink of the stream with his hands clasped in front of him.

"While his eyes were bent on the water beneath, there slowly became visible a something floating in the circular pool formed by the wash of centuries; the pool he was intending to make his death-bed. At first it was indistinct, by reason of the shadow from the bank; but it emerged thence, and took shape, which was that of a human body, lying stiff and stark upon the surface of the stream.

" In the circular current imparted by the central flow the form was brought forward till it passed under his eyes; and then he perceived with a sense of horror that it was *himself*. Not a man somewhat resembling him, but one in all respects his counterpart, his actual double, was floating as if dead in Ten Hatches Hole.

" The sense of the supernatural was strong in this unhappy man, and he turned away as one might have done in the actual presence of an appalling miracle. He covered his eyes and bowed his head. Without looking again into the stream he took his coat and hat, and went slowly away."

Ten Hatches, Dorchester

# THE LANDSCAPE OF "THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE"

THE scenes of *The Mayor of Casterbridge* are almost entirely in Casterbridge (or Dorchester) itself. Henchard, the hay-trusser, who in a drunken freak sells his wife and child at a fair to a sailor, appears first at Weyhill.

When he came to his senses the next day he goes into a church and makes a solemn vow not to touch strong liquor for the period of twenty years. He searches far and wide for his wife and child, and at last, after some months, gets work at a seaport (probably Southampton) and finally comes into Casterbridge. In my sketch at the head of this chapter I have shown the eastern entrance to Dorchester as it appears at sunset, and so if the tramp-like figure in this drawing could be imagined to be the hay-trusser, it will serve as an illustration to the book.

He prospers so well here, that we find him later in the story no less a man than the mayor and a great corn-merchant. The dramatic scenes when he meets his wife again after an interval of something like twenty years have as a background the Roman Amphitheatre, then a much more lonely spot than it is to-day. The novelist thus describes the place :

" It was to Casterbridge what the ruined Coliseum is to modern Rome, and was nearly of the same magnitude. The dusk of evening was the proper hour at which a true impression of this suggestive place could be received. Standing in the middle of the arena at that time there by degrees became apparent its real vastness, which a cursory view from the summit at noonday was apt to obscure."

## "THE MAYOR OF CASTERBRIDGE"

### CHAPTER XLIII

"A QUARTER of a mile from the highway was the prehistoric fort called Mai Dun, of huge dimensions and many ramparts, within or upon whose enclosures a human being, as seen from the road, was but an insignificant speck. Hither Henchard often resorted, glass in hand, and scanned the hedgeless *Via*—for it was the original track laid out by the legions of the Empire—to a distance of two or three miles, his object being to read the progress of affairs between Farfrae and his charmer.

"One day Henchard was at this spot when a masculine figure came along the road from Budmouth, and lingered. Applying his telescope to his eye Henchard expected that Farfrae's features would be disclosed as usual. But the lenses revealed that to-day the man was not Elizabeth-Jane's lover.

"It was one clothed as a merchant captain; and as he turned in his scrutiny of the road he revealed his face. Henchard lived a lifetime the moment he saw it. The face was Newson's."

The Roman Road, from Maiden Castle Dorchester

## THE TOWN SCENERY OF CASTERBRIDGE

THERE is a wonderful landscape setting for the dramatic scene near the end of the book where Henchard with his telescope is scanning the road by Maiden Castle. He sees a black speck moving along the hedgeless *Via*, the tree-bordered Roman way that leads from the sea to Dorchester. The speck he finds is Newson, the sailor to whom he had sold his wife.

This landscape, unlike so many in the book, is probably unaltered since the period of the story. Maiden Castle, quite apart from its interest to us in this study of Hardy topography, is an amazing thing, and perhaps the greatest example of prehistoric earthwork in England. It is a vast fort with three huge ditches around it, and it is possible to argue about it for weeks. Some say it is British; others that it is Roman or Romano-British; others that it dates from early Celtic times and has been successively altered and added to by successive conquerors. Of course, Maiden Castle is a late corruption from Mai Dun (the great hill fort) and there is nothing romantic in the name—no languishing maiden was ever incarcerated there.

There is one interesting feature that can be seen as described in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. You will remember that when Henchard and Farfrae held rival entertainments, Henchard's was held on Poundburg (another ancient earthwork that has been a field for antiquarian controversy) and Farfrae's in the West Walks. The uncertainty of the weather led Farfrae to choose this spot, and he roofed it with tarpaulins lashed to the over-arching trees. The sketch at the end of this chapter will give some idea of the ease with which such natural architecture could be adapted.

On market days there is still a good deal of Casterbridge to be seen in Dorchester, but the glory of much has departed. Here is a picturesque word sketch in Chapter IX.

"The old-fashioned fronts of these houses, which had older than old-fashioned backs, rose sheer from the pavement, into which the bow-windows protruded like bastions, necessitating a pleasing *chassez-dèchassez* movement to the time-pressed pedestrian at every few yards. He was bound also to evolve other Terpsichorean figures in respect of door-steps, scrapers, cellar-hatches, church buttresses, and the overhanging angles of walls which, originally unobtrusive, had become bow-legged and knock-kneed."

West Walks, Dorchester

# IV

# "THE TRUMPET MAJOR"

THE WHITE HORSE, NEAR WEYMOUTH

# "THE TRUMPET MAJOR"

IF *The Mayor of Casterbridge* can be called the novel of Dorchester, *The Trumpet Major* can be called the novel of Weymouth. The whole action of the story takes place in Weymouth and its immediate neighbourhood, and it deals with a theme vividly remembered by some of the older Dorset friends of Mr. Thomas Hardy as a young man. This is the theme of the great Napoleonic scare and expected invasion of England in the days before Waterloo. The fear and hatred of the great national enemy was most fantastic, and supernatural powers of evil were attributed to "Boney." We can all remember scaremongers during the Great War who attributed unbelievable and infallible knowledge to the secret emissaries of the Kaiser. I should imagine

the bogy of Napoleon was similarly grotesque, but carried to a much greater pitch of credulity.

The following extract from Chapter XXIII of *The Trumpet Major* gives a vivid impression of this national fear:

"They walked the rest of the way in silence, and coming to the tree read as follows:—

ADDRESS TO ALL RANKS AND
DESCRIPTIONS OF ENGLISHMEN

'FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,—The French are now assembling the largest force that ever was prepared to invade this Kingdom, with the professed purpose of effecting our complete Ruin and Destruction. They do not disguise their intentions, as they have often done to other Countries; but openly boast that they will come over in such Numbers as cannot be resisted.

Wherever the French have lately appeared they have spared neither Rich nor Poor, Old nor Young; but like a Destructive Pestilence, have laid waste and destroyed every Thing that before was fair and flourishing. . . .

But if the love of true Liberty and honest Fame has not ceased to animate the Hearts of Englishmen, Pay, though necessary, will be the least Part of your Reward. You will find your best Recompense in having done your Duty to your King and Country by driving back or destroying your old and implacable Enemy, envious of your Freedom and Happiness, and therefore seeking to destroy them; in having protected your Wives and Children from Death, or worse than Death, which will follow the Success of such Inveterate Foes.

ROUSE, therefore, and unite as one man in the best of Causes! United we may defy the World to conquer us; but Victory will never belong to those who are slothful and unprepared.'"

## THE LANDSCAPE OF WEYMOUTH

THE Hardy name for Weymouth is *Budmouth*, and the village of *Overcombe* is described largely from Sutton Poyntz, which lies at the foot of the downs. The water-mill belonging to Miller Loveday seems largely to be drawn from the mill which can now be seen at Upway, and which I have sketched on page 37. Adjoining this—in fact, under the same roof, but divided into a separate residence—was the abode of Mrs. Garland, the widow of a landscape painter, and her daughter Anne. The sudden advent of a large force of cavalry upon the downs above Overcombe is the signal for stirring times and immense excitement, and when " King Jarge " appears enthusiasm knows no bounds.

The marble bath in which the monarch bathed is still to be seen in the Gloucester Hotel at Weymouth (then known as Gloucester Lodge). The White Horse upon the downs gleams by sunlight or by moonlight to this day to commemorate the royal visit, and a statue on the sea-front at Weymouth shows his august majesty with a stolid expression upon his face that suggests he is contemplating the mystery of the apple getting into the dumpling without breaking the crust.

The author in his introduction to the book tells us that the tale is founded largely on testimony both oral and written. " The external incidents which direct its course are mostly an unexaggerated reproduction of the recollections of old persons well known to the author in childhood, but now long dead, who were eye-witnesses of those scenes. Of other documents consulted I may mention, for the satisfaction of those who love a true story, that the 'Address to all Ranks and Descriptions of

## "THE TRUMPET MAJOR"

### CHAPTER XXVI

"'WHAT'S the matter?' he cried to a butcher who was flying past in his cart, his wife sitting behind him without a bonnet.

"'The French have landed!' said the man, without drawing rein.

"'Where?' shouted Bob.

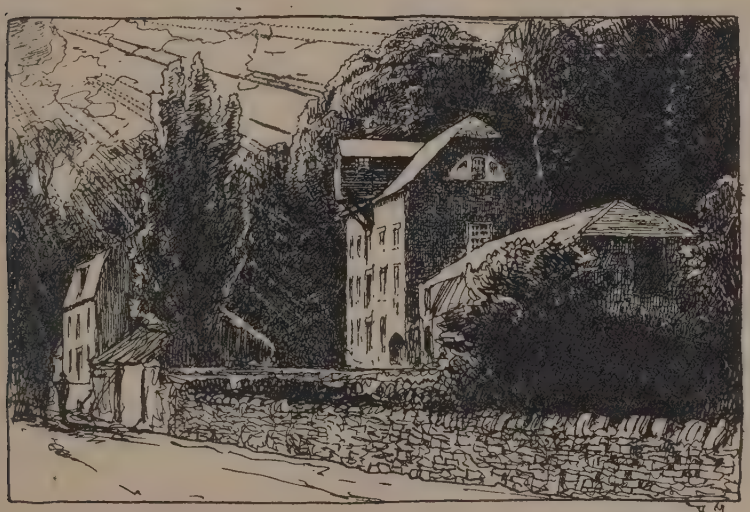
"'In West Bay; and all Budmouth is in uproar!' replied the voice, now faint in the distance."

West Bay, Bridport

Englishmen' was transcribed from an original copy in a local museum."

West Bay is to-day very much as it was in the time of this story. True, a half-hearted attempt to make it into a seaside resort has robbed it of some of its wild and primitive character, but the great headlands remain and all the surrounding features as in the days when Napoleon was rumoured to have landed there.

Another prominent feature in the scenery of the story is Poxwell



UPWAY MILL

Hall, on the road from Weymouth to Wareham. This, without much change, figures as *Oxwell Hall* in *The Trumpet Major*, and was the home of old Squire Derriman.

That the house, however little it is changed, has been restored slightly goes without saying, if our author's description of it is to be taken as literally true.

" The hall was as interesting as mansions in a state of declension usually are, as the excellent county history showed. That popular work in folio contained an old plate dedicated to the last scion of the original owners, from which drawing it appeared that in 1750, the date of publication, the windows were covered with little scratches like black flashes of lightning; that a horn of hard smoke came out of each of the twelve chimneys; that a lady and a lap-dog stood on the lawn in a strenuously walking position; and a substantial cloud and nine flying birds of no known species hung over the trees to the north-east.

" The rambling and neglected dwelling had all the romantic excellences and practical drawbacks which such mildewed places share in common with caves, mountains, wildernesses, glens, and other homes of poesy that people of taste wish to live and die in. Mustard and cress could have been raised on the inner plaster of the dewy walls at any height not exceeding three feet from the floor; and mushrooms of the most refined and thin-stemmed kinds grew up through the chinks of the larder paving."

Poxwell Hall

# V

# "FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD"

PUDDLETOWN

# "FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD"

THE landscape setting of this story is one of its most attractive features, and for this reason it has a special character of its own. *Under the Greenwood Tree*, like *The Woodlanders*, deals with rural life in forest clearings and in the shadow of great plantations. *Far from the Madding Crowd* is purely pastoral. The story opens at Oak's Farm, in the bare sheep-lands of Toller Down, which is in the north-western extremity of Dorset. Here Oak meets Bathsheba Everdene. She is a young girl working with her aunt at a small farm. A misfortune to his flock of sheep ruins Farmer Oak, and he leaves, and comes later to *Weatherbury*, which is a broad likeness of Puddletown.

Here Gabriel Oak arrives at the time of a fire, and does deeds of valour in fighting the flames. He finds that the mistress of the farm, to whom he has been so invaluable, is none other than the girl Bathsheba Everdene, who has come into this property through a legacy.

The original of *Weatherbury Farm* is no doubt Waterson House, although this stands farther from *Weatherbury* (Puddletown) in reality than it is made to do so in the story. " For the great barn," says Mr. Herman Lea in his *Highways and By-ways in Hardy's Wessex*, " we shall search for hereabouts in vain," and if Mr. Herman Lea, with his unique knowledge of Dorset, and Thomas Hardy cannot find it, it would be waste of time and energy for us to try. However, I have taken his advice and looked for a great barn elsewhere, one that answers somewhat to the description in the story, a barn at Cerne Abbas which I have sketched at the end of this chapter.

## THE LANDSCAPE OF "FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD"

THE scene of the sheep-washing is a delightful bit of word painting—so delightful that I would rather quote it as the landscape of Thomas Hardy than spoil it by making it the landscape of Donald Maxwell. In many of these scenes there is some service in showing the reader the place described under the atmosphere in which it is introduced. In this case, however, the charm is in the quality of the painting rather than in the subject matter.

"The sheep-washing pool was a perfectly circular basin of brickwork in the meadows, full of the clearest water. To birds on the wing its glassy surface, reflecting the light sky, must have been visible for miles around as a glistening Cyclops eye in a green face. The grass about the margin at this season was a sight to remember long—in a minor sort of way. Its activity in sucking the moisture from the rich damp soil was almost a process observable by the eye. The outskirts of this level water-meadow were diversified by rounded and hollow pastures, where just now every flower that was not a buttercup was a daisy. The river slid along noiselessly as a shade, the swelling reeds and sedge forming a flexible palisade along its moist brink. To the north of the mead were trees, the leaves of which were new, soft, and moist, not yet having stiffened and darkened under summer sun and drought, their colour being yellow beside a green—green beside a yellow. From the recesses of this knot of foliage the loud notes of three cuckoos were resounding through the still air."

For more landscape painting look at this word picture of the storm in Chapter XXXVII.

## "FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD"

### CHAPTER IX

"BY daylight, the bower of Oak's new-found mistress, Bathsheba Everdene, presented itself as a hoary building, of the Jacobean stage of Classic Renaissance as regards its architecture, and of a proportion which told at a glance that, as is so frequently the case, it had once been the manorial hall upon a small estate around it, now altogether effaced as a distinct property, and merged in the vast tract of a non-resident landlord, which comprised several such modest demesnes.

"Fluted pilasters, worked from the solid stone, decorated its front, and above the roof pairs of chimneys were here and there linked by an arch, some gables and other unmanageable features still retaining traces of their Gothic extraction. Soft brown mosses, like faded velveteen, formed cushions upon the stone tiling, and tufts of the houseleek or sengreen sprouted from the eaves of the low surrounding buildings. A gravel walk leading from the door to the road in front was encrusted at the sides with more moss—here it was a silver-green variety, the nut-brown of the gravel being visible to the width of only a foot or two in the centre. This circumstance, and the generally sleepy air of the whole prospect here, together with the animated and contrasting state of the reverse façade, suggested to the imagination that on the adaptation of the building for farming purposes the vital principle of the house had turned round inside its body to face the other way."

Waterson House, near Puddletown

"Then there came a third flash. Manœuvres of a most extraordinary kind were going on in the vast firmamental hollows overhead. The lightning now was the colour of silver, and gleamed in the heavens like a mailed army. Rumbles became rattles. Gabriel from his elevated position could see over the landscape at least half-a-dozen miles in front. Every hedge, bush, and tree was distinct as in a line engraving. In a paddock in the same direction was a herd of heifers, and the forms of these were visible at this moment in the act of galloping about in the wildest and maddest confusion, flinging their heels and tails high into the air, their heads to earth. A poplar in the immediate foreground was like an ink stroke on burnished tin."

Again, a little farther on in the story, is this Turneresque description of the storm :

"Heaven opened then, indeed. The flash was almost too novel for its inexpressibly dangerous nature to be at once realized, and they could only comprehend the magnificence of its beauty. It sprang from east, west, north, south. It was a perfect dance of death. The forms of skeletons appeared in the air, shaped with blue fire for bones—dancing, leaping, striding, racing around, and mingling altogether in unparalleled confusion."

The original of *Weatherbury*, the village of Puddletown, is a place shrunk to a village, but once a market town. The church is a noble one, but much altered as to its interior since Gabriel Oak sang bass in the choir. It is in the porch of this church that Oak spent the night during a great rainstorm when the water from a gurgoyle wrought havoc and destruction to poor Fanny Robin's grave.

One touch, however, in the grotesque gurgoyles we miss. Our author has evidently borrowed these features from another building. This one, whose diabolical outpouring did the damage, is described

as " too human to be called like a dragon, too impish to be like a man, too animal to be like a fiend, and not enough like a bird to be called a griffin. This horrible stone entity was fashioned as if covered with a wrinkled hide; it had short, erect ears, eyes starting from their sockets, and its fingers and hands were seizing the corners of its mouth, which they thus seemed to pull open to give free passage to the water vomited. The lower row of teeth was quite washed away, though the upper still remained. Here and thus, jutting a couple of feet from the wall against which its feet rested as a support, the creature had for four hundred years laughed at the surrounding landscape, voicelessly in dry weather, and in wet with a gurgling and snorting sound."

An Old Barn at Cerne Abbas

# VI

# "THE WELL-BELOVED"

CHURCH HOPE, PORTLAND

## "THE WELL-BELOVED"

THIS story, different in many ways from any other of our author's novels, is called by him in the sub-title *A Sketch Of a Temperament*.

It is the novel of the Isle of Portland, for the vital parts of the story are enacted there, with an occasional shifting of the scene to London. In the very beginning of the tale we have a graphic description of the course taken by a person differing from the local wayfarers. He is "climbing the steep road which leads through the sea-skirted townlet definable as the Street of Wells, and forms a pass into that Gibraltar of Wessex the singular peninsula once an island, and still called such, that stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel."

## "THE WELL-BELOVED"

FROM THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

"The peninsula carved by Time out of a single stone, whereon most of the following scenes are laid, has been for centuries immemorial the home of a curious and well-nigh distinct people, cherishing strange beliefs and singular customs, now for the most part obsolescent. Fancies, like certain soft-wooded plants which cannot bear the silent inland frosts, but thrive by the sea in the roughest of weather, seem to grow up naturally here, in particular amongst those natives who have no active concern in the labours of the 'Isle.' Hence it is a spot apt to generate a type of personage like the character imperfectly sketched in these pages—a native of natives—whom some may choose to call a fantast (if they honour him with their consideration so far), but whom others may see only as one that gave objective continuity and a name to a delicate dream which in a vaguer form is more or less common to all men, and is by no means new to Platonic philosophers.

"To those who know the rocky coign of England here depicted—overlooking the great Channel Highway, with all its suggestiveness, and standing out so far into mid-sea that touches of the Gulf Stream soften the air till February—it is matter of surprise that the place has not been more frequently chosen as the retreat of artists and poets in search of inspiration—for at least a month or two in the year, the tempestuous rather than the fine seasons by preference."

Bow and Arrow Castle, Isle of Portland

THE pedestrian before mentioned is really a native, though he looks like a stranger, having been residing far away. The intervening time had been spent amid " many contrasting societies, peoples, manners, and scenes.

"What had seemed usual in the isle when he lived there always looked quaint and odd after his later impressions. More than ever the spot seemed what it was said once to have been, the ancient Vindilia Island, and the Home of the Slingers. The towering rock, the houses above houses, one man's doorstep rising behind his neighbour's chimney, the gardens hung up by one edge to the sky, the vegetables growing on apparently almost vertical planes, the unity of the whole island as a solid and single block of limestone four miles long, were no longer familiar and commonplace ideas. All now stood dazzlingly unique and white against the tinted sea, and the sun flashed on infinitely stratified walls of oolite,

"The melancholy ruins
Of cancelled cycles, . . . "

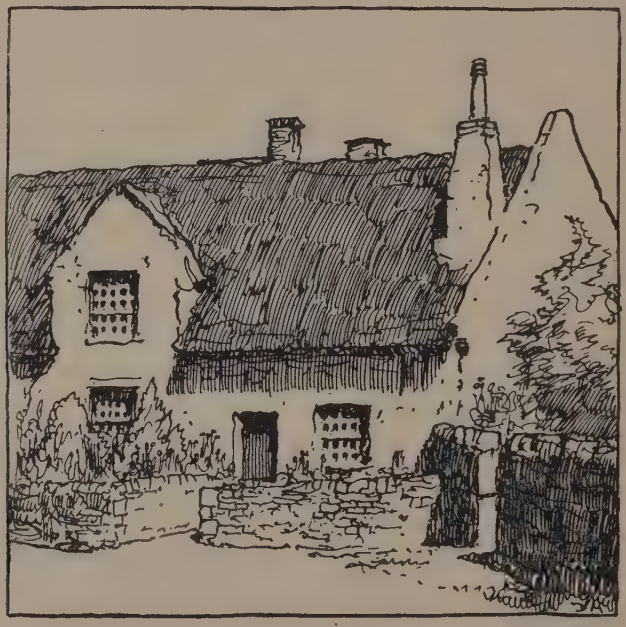
with a distinctiveness that called the eyes to it as strongly as any spectacle he had beheld afar."

Pierston, the hero of the story, is a sculptor, a natural bent one would think for a native of this place, out of which St. Paul's Cathedral and many a famous building has been carved, and his father was a quarry owner. The various scenes in the book are easy to identify, for they all lie so close together—Pennsylvania Castle, the Beal, the sinister Cave Hole, the old Hope Churchyard,

and the strange giant monolith which is fashioned into Bow and Arrow Castle.

At this last scene, of which I have tried to depict its strangeness by moonlight, we find Pierston wandering below this place which is often called Rufus Castle.

" In the evening he went out and paced down the lane to the Red King's castle overhanging the cliff, beside whose age the castle he occupied was but a thing of yesterday. Below the castle precipice lay enormous blocks, which had fallen from it, and several of them were carved over with names and initials. He knew the spot and the old trick well, and by searching in the faint moon-rays he found a pair of names which, as a boy, he himself had cut."



In the Isle of Portland

# VII

# "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

In Tincleton

## "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

THERE are many who consider this book Thomas Hardy's masterpiece. His insight into nature, his sympathy with its grim and sombre side have here full play, and the result is a wonderful work. Hardy, like many other great craftsmen, when he has done a thing well once does not do it again. Each of his great stories is a setting of its own, the two most nearly allied being *The Woodlanders* and *Under the Greenwood Tree*. *Tess* is a tale in which the human interest preponderates over all else. *The Mayor of Casterbridge* is of country town life. *Far from the Madding Crowd* is, as we have seen, a pastoral, and here is a tragedy set in such grim fantasy that we feel the people in it are almost puppets moving in a predestined gloom.

## CONCERNING "EGDON HEATH"

THE story begins with a chapter of pure landscape painting that sets the scene into which, Chapter II, come figures of men. There is the lonely figure of an old man "white-headed as a mountain, bowed in the shoulders, and faded in general aspect. He wore a glazed hat, an ancient boat-cloak, and shoes; his brass buttons bearing an anchor upon their face. In his hand was a silver-headed walking-stick, which he used as a veritable third leg, perseveringly dotting the ground with its point at every few inches' interval. One would have said that he had been, in his day, a naval officer of some sort or other.

"Before him stretched the long, laborious road, dry, empty, and white."

Soon another moving object is in sight, in this lonely waste, and one, the old man, gradually draws nearer to this object, as one craft slowly overhauling another at sea. When Captain Vye (for it is he) approaches nearer he sees that the object is red. It turns out to be a cart, red, with a red pony drawing it, and a red man walking beside it, and thus we are introduced to Diggory Venn, the reddleman. The trade is now, I think, extinct, but at one time it was an important industry, the supplying of farmers with red earth for the marking of sheep.

The *Egdon Heath* of Hardy's Wessex is a general name for variously named portions of "the Great Heath," as it is sometimes called, Wareham Heath and Puddletown Heath being two of them. It is this great background that matters to us in this study and I do not feel inclined to overmuch speculation as to the various houses in which various characters are supposed to have lived.

For purposes of the story our author has imagined that the tumuli at the western edge of this heath stood more or less in the centre, and that Rainbarrow formed "the pole and axis of this heathery world."

One of the most wonderful and rare glimpses of nature which our author gives us occurs in Chapter VI, and it seems as if lovers of the Heath must understand mysterious speech, unmeaning or unheard by strangers.

"The wind, indeed, seemed made for the scene, as the scene seemed made for the hour. Part of its tone was quite special; what was heard there could be heard nowhere else. Gusts in innumerable series followed each other from the north-west, and when each one of them raced past the sound of its progress resolved into three. Treble, tenor and bass notes were to be found therein. The general ricochet of the whole over pits and prominences had the gravest pitch of the chime. Next there could be heard the baritone buzz of a holly tree. Below these in force, above them in pitch, a dwindled voice strove hard at a husky tune, which was the peculiar local sound alluded to. Thinner and less immediately traceable than the other two, it was far more impressive than either. In it lay what may be called the linguistic peculiarity of the heath; and being audible nowhere on earth off a heath, it afforded a shadow of reason for the woman's tenseness, which continued as unbroken as ever.

"Throughout the blowing of these plaintive November winds that note bore a great resemblance to the ruins of human song which remain to the throat of fourscore and ten. It was a worn whisper, dry and papery, and it brushed so distinctly across the ear that, by the accustomed, the material minutiæ in which it originated could be realized as by touch. It was the united products of infinitesimal vegetable causes, and these were neither stems, leaves, fruit, blades, prickles, lichen, nor moss."

## "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

### CHAPTER I

"TO recline on a stump of thorn in the central valley of Egdon, between afternoon and night, as now, where the eye could reach nothing of the world outside the summits and shoulders of heathland which filled the whole circumference of its glance, and to know that everything around and underneath had been from prehistoric times as unaltered as the stars overhead, gave ballast to the mind adrift on change, and harassed by the irrepressible New. The great inviolate place had an ancient permanence which the sea cannot claim. Who can say of a particular sea that it is old? Distilled by the sun, kneaded by the moon, it is renewed in a year, in a day, or in an hour. The sea changed, the fields changed, the rivers, the villages, and the people changed, yet Egdon remained. Those surfaces were neither so steep as to be destructible by weather nor so flat as to be the victims of floods and deposits. With the exception of an aged highway, and a still more aged barrow, presently to be referred to—themselves almost crystallized to natural products by long continuance—even the trifling irregularities were not caused by pickaxe, plough, or spade, but remained as the very finger-touches of the last geological change."

On the Great Heath near Wareham

# THE LANDSCAPE OF "THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE"

EUSTACIA VYE, living alone with her grandfather in an isolated house on the heath, is a figure that fits the landscape background of this book. "She had Pagan eyes, full of nocturnal mysteries. Their light, as it came and went, and came again, was partially hampered by their oppressive lids and lashes; and of these the under lid was much fuller than it usually is with English women. . . . The new moon behind her head, an old helmet upon it, a diadem of accidental dewdrops round her brow, would have been adjuncts sufficient to strike the note of Artemis, Athena, or Hera respectively, with as close an approximation to the antique as that which passes muster on many respected canvases."

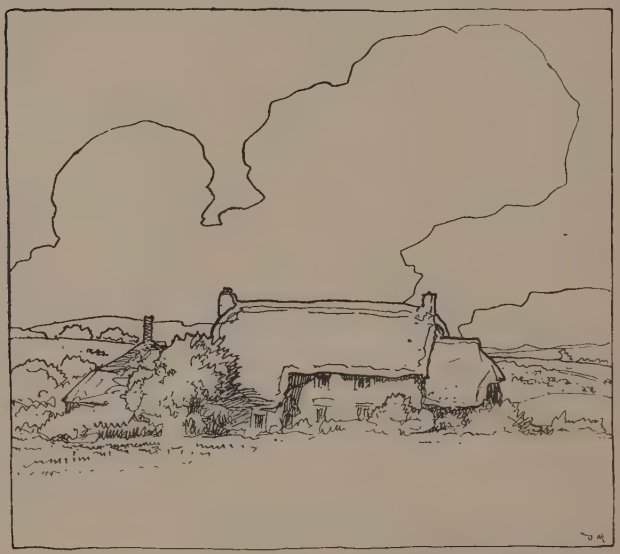
After the tragedy of Eustacia's death by drowning, and Wildeve's death at the same time in attempting to save her, the story becomes less sombre in its lighting, and towards the end we find Diggory Venn, as the husband of Thomasin, giving up the reddle business and settling down to a dairy farm on the sunnier side of the Heath at *Stickleford*, which is probably drawn from Tincleton.

I do not claim to have in any way identified the abode of Diggory Venn, but I have sketched at the beginning and end of this chapter characteristic "bits" of these deep-thatched, white-walled, roomy cottages of Tincleton, and it seems idle to do more.

We will end our landscape studies of *Egdon Heath* with one more word picture.

"In fact, precisely at this transitional point of its nightly roll into darkness, the great and particular glory of the Egdon waste began,

and nobody could be said to understand the Heath who had not been there at such a time. It could best be felt when it could not clearly be seen, its complete effect and explanation lying in this and the succeeding hours before the next dawn; then, and only then, did it tell its true tale. The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it."



A Cottage in Tincleton

# VIII

# "THE WOODLANDERS"

A Track near Melbury Osmond

## "THE WOODLANDERS"

THIS story is one that deals charmingly and unerringly with one kind of landscape, the deep wooded clefts between the higher ground around Melbury Osmond and Minterne. However, as Mr. Thomas Hardy himself pointed out to me, owing to changes and demolition of houses a great deal of artistic licence has been taken in the way of removing, by magic of the pen, buildings and estates from one part of Dorset to another. For instance, Mrs. Charmond's residence, *Hintock House*, is more or less a description of the situation of Turnworth House, near Blandford, which I have shown in the sketch at the end of this chapter.

# "THE WOODLANDERS"

## CHAPTER I

"AT length could be discerned in the dusk, about half a mile to one side, gardens and orchards sunk in a concave, and, as it were, snipped out of the woodland. From this self-contained place rose in stealthy silence tall stems of smoke, which the eye of imagination could trace downward to their root on quiet hearthstones, festooned overhead with hams and flitches. It was one of those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely knit interdependence of the lives therein.

"This place was the Little Hintock of the master-barber's search. The coming night gradually obscured the smoke of the chimneys, but the position of the wood-environed community could still be distinguished by a few faint lights, winking more or less ineffectually through the leafless boughs and the undiscernible songsters they bore, in the form of balls of feathers, at roost among them."

MELBURY OSMOND

## THE LANDSCAPE OF "THE WOODLANDERS"

THE woodland landscape so wonderfully depicted is that around Melbury Osmond—" They went noiselessly over mats of starry moss, rustled through interspersed tracts of leaves, skirted trunks with spreading roots whose mossed rinds made them like hands wearing green gloves; elbowed old elms and ashes with great forks, in which stood pools of water that overflowed on rainy days, and ran down their stems in green cascades."

Deep in these silent glades lies some of the most beautiful woodland scenery in England. Yet for the focus of it all in this story, the foliage-hidden mansion of Mrs. Charmond, I had to trek across country twelve miles to find it, Mr. Thomas Hardy himself giving me the " tip."

This I found; this large house as most faithfully depicted in Chapter VIII, and of which I have made some note in line on page 66. Thus Turnworth House is evidently the model, situation and all, for *Hintock House* in *The Woodlanders.*

" To describe it as standing in a hollow would not express the situation of the manor house; it stood in a hole. But the hole was full of beauty. From the spot which Grace had reached, a stone could easily have been thrown over or into the birds'-nested chimneys of the mansion. Its walls were surmounted by a battlemented parapet; but the grey lead roofs were quite visible behind it, with their gutters, laps, rolls, and skylights, together with letterings and shoe-patterns cut by idlers thereon.

" The front of the house was an ordinary manorial presentation

of Elizabethan windows, mullioned and hooded, worked in rich snuff-coloured freestone from Ham-hill quarries. The ashlar of the walls, where not overgrown with ivy and other creepers, was coated with lichen of every shade, intensifying its luxuriance with its nearness to the ground till, below the plinth, it merged in moss.

"Above the house to the back was a dense plantation, the roots of whose trees were above the level of the chimneys. The corresponding high ground on which Grace stood was richly grassed, with only an old tree here and there. A few sheep lay about, which as they ruminated looked quietly into the bedroom windows."

(*Hintock House*) TURNWORTH HOUSE

# IX

# "TWO ON A TOWER"

THE GRASS AVENUE, CHARBOROUGH PARK

# "TWO ON A TOWER"

THOMAS HARDY in his own preface to this book sets out two facts concerning it. The first is that the motive of the story was "the outcome of a wish to set the emotional history of the two infinitesimal lives against the stupendous background of the stellar universe, and to impart to readers the sentiment that of these contrasting magnitudes the smaller might be the greater of them as men." The second is the fact that the scene of the story is based on two actual places "each of which has a column standing upon it. Certain surrounding peculiarities have been imported into the narrative from both sites."

## "TWO ON A TOWER"

### CHAPTER I

"HERE stood this aspiring piece of masonry, erected as the most conspicuous and ineffaceable reminder of a man that could be thought of; and yet the whole aspect of the memorial betokened forgetfulness. Probably not a dozen people within the district knew the name of the person commemorated, while, perhaps, not a soul remembered whether the column were hollow or solid, whether with or without a tablet explaining its date and purpose."

The Tower in Charborough Park

## THE LANDSCAPE OF "TWO ON A TOWER"

IN studying the landscape of this book, I have been led to consider the author's statement that "certain peculiarities have been imported into the narrative from both sites," and have come to the following conclusions. The lonely site of the tower, as described as almost inaccessible across fields in any but dry weather, is undoubtedly suggested by Rings Hill Speer, or Milborne Speer. This, when I saw it, was so overgrown and set amongst dense trees that only the top was visible. It would be easy to miss it. Built chiefly of brick, it is somewhat insignificant, more in the nature of a monument than a tower, and could hardly have been made the place for an observatory. The earthwork in which it stands is probably Celtic, and the concentric ridges give to the site the name of Rings Hill.

The other tower, the tower in Charborough Park, is the one, I think, which is the model for the one where St. Cleeve set up his telescope. It is clear that as the book proceeds our author has described more and more the tower at Charborough and less and less Milborne Speer. In fact, I would go so far as to say that the *site* of the tower, far enough from Lady Constantine's house, *Welland House* in the story, evidently Charborough House, must necessarily have been farther away from the house than is Charborough Tower, or she would have known more about it. The tower at Charborough stands in the grounds of the house. On page 69 I have sketched the grass avenue leading from Charborough House to the tower. This was made from the steps at the base of the tower, and looks down to Charborough House, of which only a

turret and part of the back is visible. We can imagine Lady Constantine escaping from the loneliness of her great house and coming up here by night to meet the astronomer.

The tower at Charborough is built in what I should describe as Horace Walpole Gothic, and reminds me architecturally of Strawberry Hill. Our author, being an architect, has mercifully turned it into "the Tuscan order of classic architecture," but it looks dainty and beautiful by moonlight as it rises into a star-spangled sky among the dark trees.

THE TOWER, CHARBOROUGH PARK

# X

# "JUDE THE OBSCURE"

(*Marygreen*) GREAT FAWLEY

# "JUDE THE OBSCURE"

THIS, the last novel that Thomas Hardy ever wrote—thirty-three years before his death. In some schools of literary criticism it was not well received as being too frank, for, to use the author's own words, he tries to tell, "without a mincing of words, of a deadly war waged with old apostolic desperation between flesh and spirit." "I am not aware," he writes, "that there is anything in the handling to which exception can be taken."

However, Hardy took some of these attacks upon him so seriously that he told a friend at a London club that he would never write another novel, and he never did.

## "JUDE THE OBSCURE"

### PART IV (i)

"THE spot was the burial-place of a king and a queen, of abbots and abbesses, saints and bishops, knights and squires. The bones of King Edward 'the Martyr,' carefully removed hither for holy preservation, brought Shaston a renown which made it the resort of pilgrims from every part of Europe, and enabled it to maintain a reputation extending far beyond English shores. To this fair creation of the great Middle Age the Dissolution was, as historians tell us, the death-knell. With the destruction of the enormous abbey the whole place collapsed in a general ruin; the Martyr's bones met with the fate of the sacred pile that held them, and not a stone is now left to tell where they lie.

"The natural picturesqueness and singularity of the town still remain; but strange to say these qualities, which were noted by many writers in ages when scenic beauty is said to have been unappreciated, are passed over in this, and one of the queerest and quaintest spots in England stands virtually unvisited to-day.

"It has a unique position on the summit of an almost perpendicular scarp, rising on the north, south, and west sides of the borough out of the deep alluvial vale of Blackmoor, the view from the Castle Green over three counties of verdant pasture—South, Mid and Nether Wessex—being as sudden a surprise to the unexpectant traveller's eyes as the medicinal air is to his lungs."

SHAFTESBURY

## THE LANDSCAPE OF "JUDE THE OBSCURE"

THE scenes of *Jude the Obscure* are various, but the principal interest is in Shaftesbury and its neighbourhood so far as landscape is concerned. The story opens at a region farther north than most of the Wessex novels country, and is sometimes within sight of Oxford (*Christminster*), as we are reminded by Jude's evening walks to the high ground where Icknield Street crosses the summit of the hills.

"'Christminster is out across there, by that clump. You can see it—at least, you can on a clear day. Ah, no, you can't now.'

"'The time I've noticed it is when the sun is going down in a blaze of flame, and it looks like—I don't know what.'

"'The heavenly Jerusalem,' suggested the serious urchin."

And so this village lad, so sensitive that he will avoid stepping upon earth worms—a rare scruple among farm hands—dimly aspires to scholarship and wisdom.

The village of *Marygreen* is largely drawn from Great Fawley, in South Berkshire. In spite of its name, it is a little place and quite "out of the world." There is a Little Fawley near, so its claim to size may be only relatively. Our author gives us a clue to the identity of *Marygreen* by making the first surname mentioned in the book, old Miss Fawley—if we exclude Mr. Phillotson, the schoolmaster, who is a bird of passage and leaving the place. In like manner a clue is given as to Little Hintock in *The Woodlanders* by calling its principal "native" Melbury—and thus we look to Melbury Osmond, which is undoubtedly the place.

Jude, for a time, is apprenticed to a stone-cutter at a place very like Wantage. His disastrous marriage with Arabella, who really secures him by taking every advantage of the weak, but high-minded youth. She leaves him, and we find him at Oxford, still working as a stonemason, but with aspirations to something better.

He wanders about at night. At the end of this chapter I have sketched something of which I imagine he must have seen. " There would jut into the path porticoes, oriels, doorways of enriched and florid Middle Age design, their extinct air being accentuated by the rottenness of the stones. It seemed impossible that modern thought could house itself in such decrepit and superseded chambers."

The scene is soon at *Melchester*, in which we recognize Salisbury, and then our author settles down to painting Shaston, the ancient British Palladour.

" From whose foundation first such strange reports arise" (as Drayton sang it), " was, and is, in itself the city of a dream."

Shaston is the old name for Shaftesbury, and a far less euphonious one, and is, or rather was, " a city set on a hill." Its many towers, now, alas! are gone, and owing to the unfortunate fact that its church yields rather an uninteresting sky-line, there is no leading feature to proclaim from afar its distinctive character.

I have depicted it facing page 76 as seen on an evening in late autumn, when in splendour of copper and gold the last rays of the sun shall give us food for " vague imaginings of its castle, its three mints, its magnificent apsidal abbey, the chief glory of South Wessex, its twelve churches, its shrines, chantries, hospitals, its gabled freestone mansions—all now ruthlessly swept away."

The tragedy of *Jude the Obscure* moves on to Oxford, which is the end. For our studies in landscape I should prefer to end here at Shaston, high upon the hill. " There was another peculiarity—

this a modern one—which Shaston appeared to owe to its site. It was the resting-place and headquarters of the proprietors of wandering vans, shows, shooting-galleries, and other itinerant concerns whose business lay largely at fairs and markets. As strange wild birds are seen assembled on some lofty promontory, meditatively pausing for longer flights, or to return by the course they followed thither, so here, in this cliff-town, stood in stultified silence the yellow and green caravans bearing names not local, as if surprised by a change in the landscape so violent as to hinder their further progress; and here they usually remained all the winter till they turned to seek again their old tracks in the following spring."

Again, there is a picture of Shaftesbury, with old Dorset reminiscences and a Hardyesque touch of humour.

" Impossible to a railway, it can best be reached on foot, next best by light vehicles; and it is hardly accessible to these but by a sort of isthmus on the north-east that connects it with the high chalk table-land on that side. . . . Its situation rendered water the great want of the town; and within living memory horses, donkeys, and men may have been seen toiling up the winding ways to the top of the steep, laden with tubs and barrels filled from the wells beneath the mountain, and hawkers retailing their contents at the price of a halfpenny a bucketful.

" This difficulty in the water supply, together with two other odd facts, namely, that the chief graveyard slopes up as steeply as a roof behind the church, and that in former times the town passed through a curious period of corruption, conventual and domestic, gave rise to the saying that Shaston was remarkable for three consolations to man, such as the world afforded not elsewhere. It was a place where the churchyard lay nearer heaven than the church steeple, where beer was more plentiful than water, and where there were more wanton women than honest wives and maids. It is also

said that after the Middle Ages the inhabitants were too poor to pay their priests, and hence were compelled to pull down their churches, and refrain altogether from the public worship of God; a necessity which they bemoaned over their cups in the settles of their inns on Sunday afternoons."

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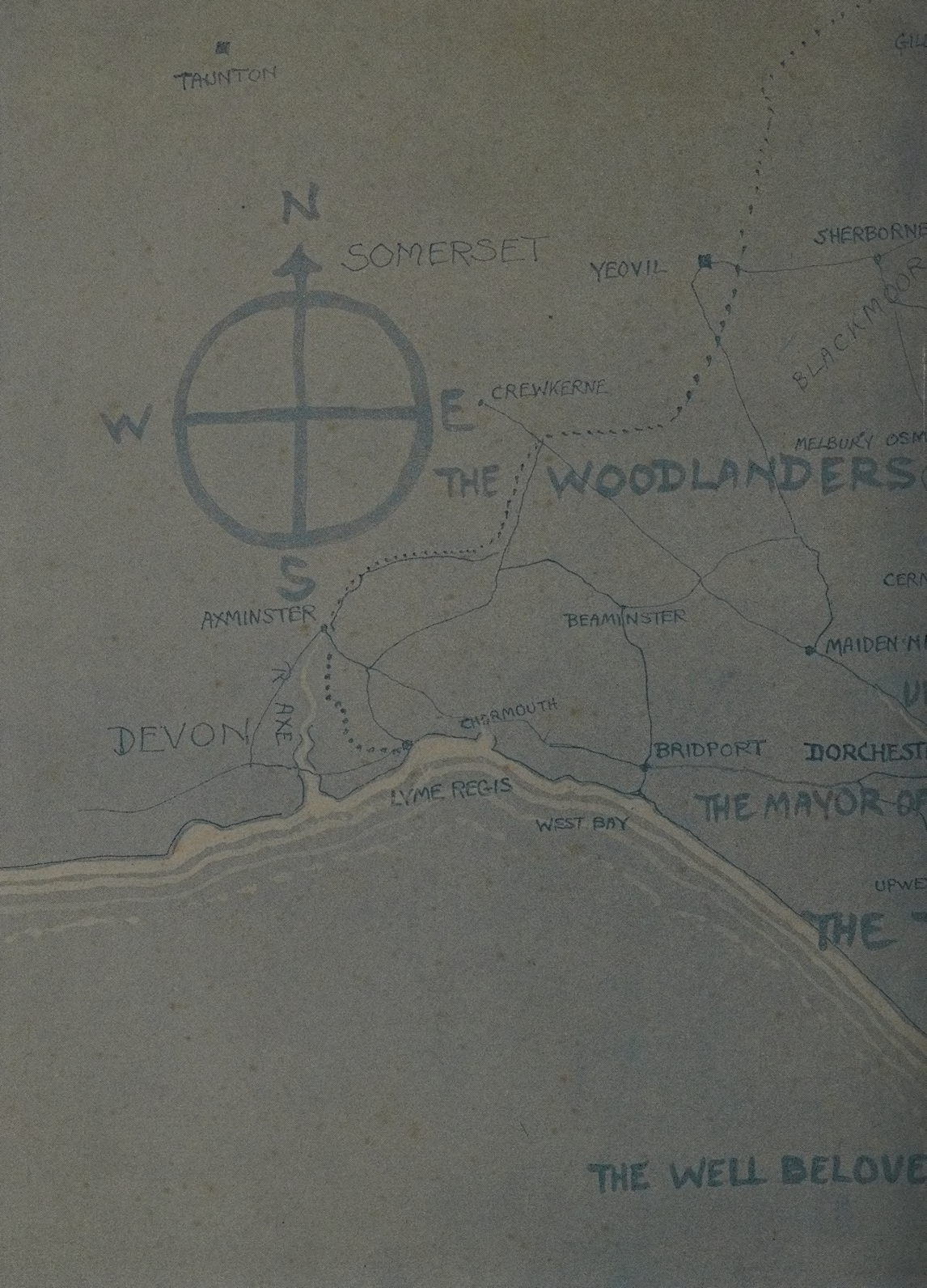
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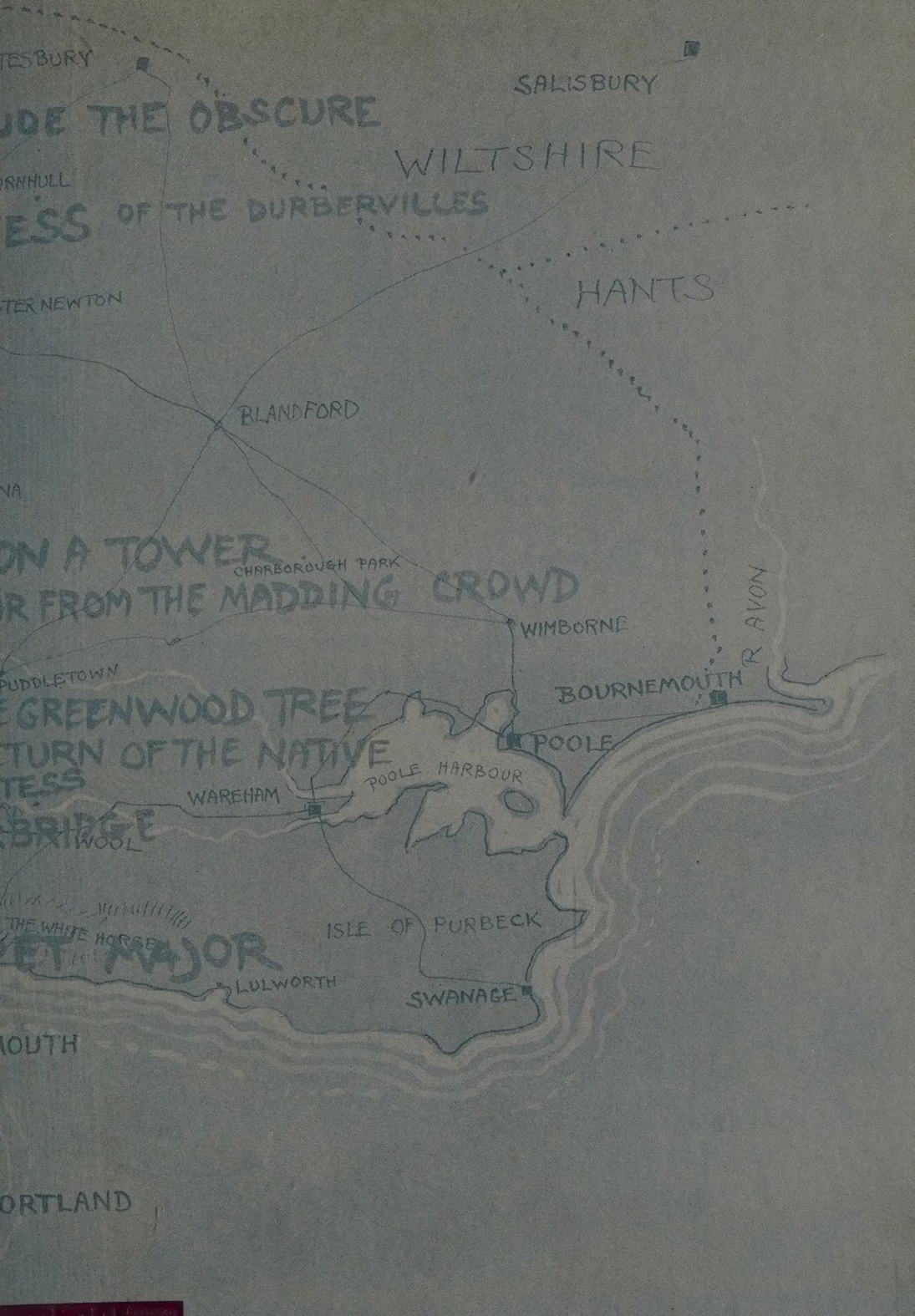
THE WELL BELOVE


TESBURY
SALISBURY
JDE THE OBSCURE
WILTSHIRE
ORNHULL
ESS OF THE DURBERVILLES
TER NEWTON
HANTS
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NA
ON A TOWER
CHARBOROUGH PARK
R FROM THE MADDING CROWD
WIMBORNE
R AVON
PUDDLETOWN
E GREENWOOD TREE
BOURNEMOUTH
CTURN OF THE NATIVE
POOLE
TESS
POOLE HARBOUR
WAREHAM
BRIDGE
WOOL
THE WHITE HORSE
ISLE OF PURBECK
ET MAJOR
LULWORTH
SWANAGE
OUTH
ORTLAND